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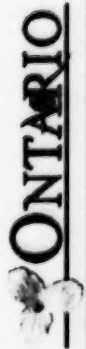
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# Ontario Fur-bearing Research and Services Committee

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY INTRODUCTION AND SUB-COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The sub-committee held it annual meeting on June 18, 1998 at the Government of Ontario Building at 1 Stone Road West in Guelph.

The Chair introduced the two new members of the sub-committee, Ted Parkinson, Ontario Fur Breeders Association and Dr. Marina Brash, Animal Health Laboratory, University of Guelph. For the fourth consecutive year the chinchilla industry representative did not participate in the meeting. The Chair distributed the agenda.

The Chair noted that recommendations resulting from the OASCC review were at the Strategic Management Committee level, thus little could be reported. Issues being reviewed likely to include frequency of meetings, accountability, timeliness, OASCC role in research, services or both.

The Chair informed the sub-committee that there was reason for cautious optimism, in that OMAFRA's Education, Research and Laboratories anticipated a special research fund for 1998/99. The funds which would encompass alternative livestock, as well as alternative crops and non-food applications. OMAFRA is developing a Request for Proposals for the 1998/99 fiscal year, which will be based on the top industry priorities as identified through the OASCC sub-committees (fur-bearing, goat & deer).

The chair asked the sub-committee to keep certain guidelines in mind, when developing research priorities based on direction given from ARIO/OASCC/OMAFRA. The research priorities should:

- be more "strategic" in nature, thus building a strong business case of benefits of research (especially economic);
- be medium to long term research;
- benefit or provide competitive advantage to Ontario;
- be research - not literature reviews;
- ensure non-duplication of existing research.

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It was also stressed that recommendations would likely have a better chance of receiving funding, if the respective industries reinforced their commitment to the recommendations, by matching or contributing partially towards the proposed research.

In previous years the Canada Mink Breeders Association (CMBA) has deducted 2 cents/pelt for research. At the 1997 CMBA annual general meeting, the research deduction was increased to 5 cents/pelt shipped to North American Fur Auction (NAFA), Rexdale. Prior to 1998/99, the research deduction was collected only on pelts marketed by NAFA and did not apply to pelts marketed through Seattle Fur Exchange. CMBA and NAFA now have an agreement with Seattle Fur Exchange to allow automatic

research deduction for all Canadian pelts shipped to Seattle. The research pelt levy is equivalent to \$16,000/year based on 320,000 pelts produced in Ontario or \$40,000 for the Canadian crop of 800,000 pelts. A commitment of \$40,000/year shows the fur industry is serious about research. The industry is very interested in pursuing cost-shared research.

Greg Fries and Mike Bollert presented an overview of the state of the mink and fox farming industries respectively.

The Chair circulated research papers that had been collected from the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Michigan State University and Nova Scotia Agricultural College. In addition Ted Parkinson presented an overview of a project being funded by the Canada Mink Breeders Association.

- \$38,000 - Foot Pad Lesions in Mink, Dr. Bruce Hunter & Caroline Brojer, University of Guelph - Canada Mink Breeders Association funding for a 2 year project.

He also outlined the following projects which are currently being funded from the U.S. Mink Farmers Foundation's research budget (\$75,000):

- \$12,000 U.S. - Feed Preservative Research (i.e. - formaldehyde), Dr. Richard J. Aulerich, Michigan State University
- \$10,000 U.S. - Development of a Test to Identify Pathogenic Bacteria - Working With ELISA Test, Dr. Neil Dyar, North Dakota State University
- \$6,700 U.S. - Development of Aleutian Disease Vaccine - Specifically on Receptor Sites at the Cellular Level, Marshall Bloom, Rocky Mountain Labs
- \$10,500 U.S.
  - Effects of Zinc & Melatonin on Immunity System, Dr. Dale Barnard, Utah State University
  - Development of a Corona Virus Vaccine, Dr. John Gorham & Gary Durrant
  - Feed Preservative Studies and Trials - Dr. Gary Durrant

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Ted Parkinson also outlined the following applications which had requested CMBA funding:

- Alternative Feed Ingredients for the Mink Industry, Nova Scotia Agricultural College - proposed 2 year study encompassing \$80,900 (65% Agri-Focus, 23% CMBA & 12% Nova Scotia Fur Institute). CMBA approved funding of \$5,000 in 1998/99 and \$5,000 in 1999/2000.
- Preservation and Testing of Poultry and Fish By-Product Feedstuffs for Mink - proposed 2 year study encompassing \$42,700 (77% Agri-Focus, 23% CMBA). CMBA funding pending.
- Shared Funding for the NSAC Fur Research Chair Position - Dr. Kirsti Rouvinen. For the last 5 years, this position has been funded by the Nova Scotia Dept. of Agriculture and Marketing (NSDAM). NSDAM has committed \$35,000/year for 5 years & Nova Scotia Mink Breeders has secured \$50,000 towards the first 3 years. CMBA was being asked for \$15,000/year for the next 5 years. CMBA will fund \$75,000 over the next 5 years! Total cost is \$70-75,000/year.

The Canada Mink Breeders Association has presented the Arlen Kerr Memorial Scholarship of \$2,000 to Caroline Brojer, who is working with Dr. Bruce Hunter on the foot pad lesion research in farmed mink.

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## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

With the repeal of the Fur Farms Act in 1997, OMAFRA no longer compiles fur farm statistics. The compilation of fur farm statistics is now the responsibility of Statistics Canada. The Statistics Canada data only encompasses mink and fox farms and does not include the total number of fur farms including other species (i.e. - lynx), nor does the data account for farms that raise multiple species (i.e. - a farm raising both mink and fox is considered two separate farms). OMAFRA estimates there is a total of 90 fur farms left in Ontario in 1998, some 5% less than in 1997 and 73% less farms than there were in 1988.

**Table 1 - Number of Ontario Fur Farms for all Species Except Chinchilla**

(\* - estimated figure)

Year	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
# Farms	330	315	250	202	171	143	128	122	111	95	90*

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## Mink

The mink farming industry went through 5 straight years from 1988 to 1993, where pelt prices were at, or below the cost of production, estimated at \$30/pelt. The depressed markets are the key reason, why there are 68% fewer mink farms in 1998 (67), than there were in 1988 (208).

Fortunately, mink markets have been remained stable and relatively strong since the 1994 pelt crop was marketed early in 1995. With the exception of one or two sales in 1998, the market has shown strength, particularly in the male skins, as these trim furs become more popular. Female skins moved well, but at bargain prices. The 1997 pelt crop sold for an average of \$43.02, some 8.2% less than the 1996 mink pelt crop, which averaged \$46.65. The strong U.S. economy actually benefited Ontario fur farmers since the Canadian mink crop sold in U.S dollars (1.43 average conversion).

**Table 2 - Ontario Mink Production Statistics (\* - estimated figures)**

Year	# Mink Farms	Total # Female Breeders	Average Farm Size (# females)	Total # Mink Born	# Mink Born Per Female	Total # Mink Pelted	# Mink Pelted Per Female	Average Pelt Price	Farm Gate Revenue (millions)
1988	208	161,978	779	684,169	4.2	651,248	4.0	\$23.62	\$15.4
1989	199	159,080	799	640,084	4.0	674,355	4.2	\$16.77	\$11.3
1990	153	105,448	689	379,370	3.6	369,978	3.5	\$25.93	\$9.6
1991	127	93,517	736	371,555	4.0	351,863	3.8	\$23.36	\$8.2
1992	109	92,047	837	385,022	4.2	384,604	3.2	\$20.62	\$7.9
1993	99	76,902	801	313,519	4.2	298,517	3.9	\$37.62	\$11.2
1994	86	76,915	874	327,781	4.3	315,589	4.1	\$31.97	\$10.1
1995	84	75,490	899	327,600	4.3	315,693	4.2	\$65.00	\$20.5
1996	76	74,560	981	336,000	4.5	319,000	4.3	\$46.65	\$14.9
1997	70	77,840	1,110	330,100	4.2	322,300	4.1	\$43.02	\$13.9
1998	67	79,000	1,180	332,000*	4.2*	322,000*	4.1*	Not Sold	Not Sold
1998/97	95.7%	102%	106%	101%*	101%*	100%*	100%*	N.A.	N.A.

The strong markets of 1997 prompted many mink farmers to keep

more breeders. Ontario's mink breeding inventory, increased by 2%, to 79,000 females being kept in 1998. However, production is thought to be down slightly, thus there is likely to be little change from the 322,000 pelts produced in 1997. In 1997, Ontario produced 32.2% of the 1,001,100 mink produced in Canada, followed by Nova Scotia (31.5%), British Columbia (18%) and Quebec (5.6%). Ontario farmed mink raised in 1997, accounted for \$13.9 million in farm gate sales.

The biggest buyers of mink pelts sold by North American Fur Auctions (NAFA) in the 1998 sales, were China/Hong Kong (30% of total), Greece (27% - most of which ultimately goes to Russia as manufactured goods), United States (14%), Russia (12%), Canada (5%), Italy (4%) and Korea (2%). The Canadian and U.S. take was less than expected, due to the unseasonably warm winter in 1997/98. The fur market is truly global in nature; however as international economies change, so do the markets. In 1997, Korea was the largest buyer, purchasing 44% of NAFA's mink; however, the demise of the Korean economy, resulted in Korea buying only 2% of the 1997 pelt crop (sold in 1998). Fragile international economies, particularly those of Russia and Asian countries, have many in the fur industry very concerned about anticipated 1999 prices and levels of clearance (% of pelts sold).

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### Fox Farming

The average pelt price for farmed fox increased by 4.7% from \$83.53 for the 1996 pelt crop, to \$87.42 for the 1997 crop. However, in spite of the modest increase, this was the ninth consecutive year, in which the average pelt price has been below the cost of production, which is estimated at \$90-100. Although the number of fox farms remained virtually unchanged (down to 31 in 1998, compared to 32 in 1997), there was 16% decrease in the number of breeders kept in 1998. The average herd size decreased from 45 vixens in 1997, to 38 females in 1998.

Fox pelts were sold mainly to Russia, China and Greece to be used primarily as trim. In order for the fox sector to thrive, the garment trade must expand.

**Table 3 - Ontario Fox Production Statistics (\* - estimated figures)**

Year	# Fox Farms	Total # Female Breeders	Average Farm Size (# females)	Total # Fox Born	# Fox Born Per Female	Total # Fox Pelted	# Fox Pelted Per Female	Average Pelt Price	Farm Gate Revenue (millions) (000's)
1988	151	5,858	39	12,050	2.1	11,118	1.9	\$55.10	\$612.6
1989	145	5,633	39	10,564	1.9	11,230	2.0	\$34.51	\$387.9
1990	119	3,735	32	6,243	1.7	6,741	1.8	\$32.75	\$220.8
1991	87	2,227	26	3,876	1.7	3,616	1.6	\$44.83	\$162.1
1992	74	2,176	29	3,766	1.7	4,038	1.9	\$31.30	\$126.4
1993	57	1,719	30	2,879	1.7	2,910	1.7	\$83.85	\$244.0
1994	50	1,560	31	2,633	1.7	2,406	1.5	\$72.00	\$173.2
1995	47	1,605	34	2,427	1.5	2,316	1.4	\$68.00	\$157.5
1996	43	1,388	32	2,290	1.7	2,090	1.5	\$83.53	\$174.6
1997	32	1,403	45	2,500	1.8	2,430	1.7	\$87.42	\$212.4
1998	31	1,180	38	2,100+	1.8*	2,040*	1.7*	Not Sold	Not Sold
1998/97	96.9%	84%	84%	84%*	100%*	84%*	100%	N.A.	N.A.

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**Chinchilla**

It is estimated there are about 150 chinchilla ranchers in Ontario, most of whom are part time. The average herd size is 30-50 breeding females and the total annual production is estimated at 20,000 pelts. Ontario represents about half of the ranches nationally and also half the production. There has been renewed interest in chinchillas, on the heels of three excellent years where the international pelt supply was low, relative to market demands.

Table 4 summarizes auction results reported by North American Fur Auctions in Rexdale. The bulk of the remaining Ontario chinchilla crop is marketed through private fur brokers. The cost of production (excluding labour) is estimated at \$20/pelt.

**Table 4 - Chinchilla Sale Results Reported by North American Fur Auctions**

Year	# Chinchilla Pelts Sold By Auction	Average Chinchilla Pelt Price
1995	14,673	\$56.00
1996	10,356	\$57.35
1997	2,316	\$51.28

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## **EMERGING ISSUES**

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### **1. FOOT PAD LESIONS IN FARMED MINK**

This condition was first reported 2 years ago, in males just prior to breeding season.. The males' foot pads were so badly infected and that many did not breed, which ultimately lowered reproductive performance and production. Some mink also developed lesions on their head, nostrils, ears and eyes. There was concern expressed that this condition may be associated with the feeding of seal meat (either raw or cooked).

As a result of health related problems, Ontario mink farmers (& others) have stopped feeding seal meat as part of the mink diet. If proven not to cause problems, seal meat has potential to be a good feed ingredient for fur farming industry. The pet food industry is also reluctant to use seal meat because of potential problems and potential negative image it might portray to the public, if seal meat was included in pet food.

Ontario fur farmers could potentially feed 10-20 lb. of seal meat/mink. Assuming seal meat was fed at these levels to 320,000 mink, the Ontario mink industry would consume 3.2 - 6.4 million pounds (1,450 -2,900T) per year. Before problems arose, farmers were paying \$0.18/lb, but are now paying only \$0.10/lb., if seal meat is being purchased at all. Transportation costs about 5 cent/lb. The seal industry is desperately looking for a price competitive and environmentally friendly market for the seal meat.

Also keep in mind that Ontario fur farmers have lost some of their traditional feed sources (i.e. 5 million pounds of fish waste from Lake Erie fisheries now bought by pet food companies), as they are unable to compete with prices paid by pet food companies (5 cents/pound including scales).

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### **2. WEAKER MARKETS ANTICIPATED DUE TO DOWNTURN IN GLOBAL ECONOMY ADVANCED PAYMENTS PROGRAM**

With some of the Canada's key markets being in the forefront of the economic turmoil (Korea, Russia, China, Hong Kong), producers are concerned not only about potentially lower prices, but also about whether the international buyers will be able to buy at all. This has producers concerned about cash flow and the ability to finance the 1999 crop. The Canada Mink Breeders Association (CMBA) is working towards having mink pelts included as a commodity, under the Advanced Payments Program of the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act for the 1998/99 selling season.

A cash advance of 50% of the expected average farm gate pelt price, at or after harvest, would allow producers to store the pelt crop and sell it throughout the year to achieve higher returns. The maximum advance would be \$250,000/producer. The federal government would pay the interest on the first \$50,000 issued to a producer. The maximum period, the advance could be held is one year. The producer organization (CMBA) would be responsible for ensuring that the cash advance is repaid as the crop is sold.

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### 3. LIVESTOCK MEDICINES COURSES

This is an initiative to enhance the already high quality standards of Ontario food and food products derived from livestock. Many of the Ontario livestock commodity organizations support voluntary producer certification, through commodity specific "Livestock Medicines Courses". Producers would need to be certified by 2003 in order to maintain access to over-the-counter livestock medicines. Non-certified producers would have to purchase livestock medicines from their veterinarian. The Ontario Fur Breeders Association has expressed concern that this initiative is a food quality assurance initiative, and thus should not apply to the fur industry, since it is producing non-food products.

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### 4. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Unlike the swine industry, the fur farming industry has not had high media profile regarding manure management and siting/zoning issues (establishing new operations or expanding existing ones). However the fur farming industry is aware and concerned with the regulatory and non-regulatory implications that may arise regarding zoning, manure management and dead animal disposal.

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## 5. FARM BREAK-INS AND VANDALISM

There have been no break-ins or animal releases here in Ontario since the two March 1997, incidents where over 1,900 mink were released. Some believe this apparent inactivity is related to the fact, that the judicial system has moved slowly on the prosecution of the 5 suspects charged in connection with those incidents. There have however been a number releases in the U.S and the rest of Canada during 1998. As a result, fur farmers are implementing on-farm security measures (fences, motion detectors, dogs...), in some instances costing as much as \$40,000.

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## REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN ON PREVIOUS YEAR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

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The sub-committee expressed frustration and disappointment that the "Responses to the 1997 Recommendations" were not ready in time for the sub-committee meeting which was held on June 18. Since AAFC does not conduct research in the area of fur-bearing animals, the recommendations directed to AAFC were not forwarded by OASCC. The U of G, ARIO and OMAFRA responses were received by the chair on July 10, 1998.

ARIO's response to all five of the fur-bearing sub-committee's research recommendations was "The ARIO supports the various minor species industries. A Request for Proposals (RFP) is to be developed for the 1998/99 fiscal year utilizing special research funds which became available for 1998. The RFP will be developed by OMAFRA and will be based on the top industry priorities as identified through the OASCC sub-committee."

The U of G's response to the research recommendations was "The recommendations outlined above are not being addressed in the Animal Research Program in 1998/99. The sub-committee's recommendations are included in each year's call for research through the inclusion of the OARSC annual report."

OMAFRA's response to the service recommendation was "The ministry through the contract with the University of Guelph will continue to provide diagnostic and consultative services to fur farmers. Disease trends will be monitored. The laboratory will continue to investigate methods to provide blood testing at as low a price as possible. However, operational and overhead costs must be covered in establishing fees. Ministry and Animal Health Laboratory staff can provide assistance to the industry on developing a certification program to eradicate Aleutian Disease. Such programs require producer input and direction to be successful."

As of October 20, no responses had been received from CARC, the Canada Committee on Animal Welfare or the Canada Committee on Animal Health.

Although the sub-committee anticipated that no funds would be allocated, based on previous experience, it felt strongly there needs to be more accountability and timeliness in providing the "Responses" and other feedback to the "species" sub-committees.

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# Summary of Distribution of Recommendations To Agency(ies)

RECOMMENDATION	AAFC	ARIO	CCA	CARC	OMAFRA	OTHER
Research #1 - Improved Health		X	Animal Health	X		
Research #2 - An evaluation of the availability, accessibility and cost of "opportunity feeds" for fur farmers.		X	Nutrition	X		
Service #1 - Diagnostic and Aleutian Disease Serology Laboratories						Animal Health Lab., U of G

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## **1998 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

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### **RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION #1: IMPROVED HEALTH**

**TO: ARIO, CANADA COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL HEALTH, CARC**

**PRIORITY LEVEL: B-1**

#### **DETAILS:**

1. To investigate the impact of Aleutian disease on the Ontario mink industry with the aim of developing a provincial certification program for AD clean farms.
2. To investigate the cause of food pad necrosis syndrome in mink and determine if there is a relationship between the disease and the feeding of seal meat. If a relationship is found, the research would determine appropriate methods of feed treatment that would allow the product to be utilized as a feed source by the fur industry.
3. To evaluate the use of anabolic steroids such as Winstrol in the treatment of female mink with nursing disease.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The Ontario fur industry (mink and fox production) competes in a tough international marketplace. The economic viability of fur farms is dependent upon solid, humane management practices and carefully planned health programs. Health management issues remain as research priorities in the mink and fox industries. Non-infectious disease conditions such as nursing sickness, mastitis, urolithiasis and early kit loss are being better controlled as farm management practices continue to improve. Nursing disease still results in economic loss on Ontario mink farms and there is no efficient method of treating affected mink. There are reports from the U.S. mink industry that anabolic steroidal therapy may be an effective treatment. However, there is no scientific evidence to substantiate this.

Infectious diseases such as Aleutian disease (AD) and corona virus enteritis continue to cause economic loss in the Ontario and Canadian mink industry. Aleutian disease, caused by a parvo virus, results in mortality and reproductive losses. AD is likely the single most important disease in the mink industry and can only be controlled by extensive blood testing followed by removal of positive animals. There is a need for research to assess the economic impact of AD in the Ontario industry, coupled with development of a workable provincial certification program to identify AD clean farms as a source of healthy breeding stock.

A shortage of high quality and affordable feed continues to be a priority for the fur industry. The availability of alternative feed sources such as east coast seal meat provide an appealing option for the industry, but the nutritional quality and safety of these feed sources often have not been well studied. Recently the feeding of seal meat has been suspected to cause a disease in mink characterized by lesions on the feet and nose pads (food pad necrosis syndrome). The cause of this condition, its association (if any) with the feeding of seal meat and methods of feed treatment or feed processing that would allow this product to be useful for the fur industry has high priority. Research funded by the Canada Mink Breeders Association is ongoing, attempting to isolate an infectious agent and describe the epidemiology of the disease. At the present time no causative agent has been identified.

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**RESEARCH RECOMMENDATION #2: AN EVALUATION OF THE AVAILABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND COST OF "OPPORTUNITY FEEDS" FOR FUR FARMERS.**

**TO: ARIO, CANADA COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL NUTRITION, CARC**

**PRIORITY LEVEL: B-1**

**DETAILS:**

1. To prepare an inventory of potential "opportunity feed" sources, taking into consideration the amounts produced, predicted continuity of supply, actual cost, if any, and costs associated with transportation, storage and handling.
2. To assess the potential quality of such feeds, based initially on an evaluation of possible deleterious components, disease hazards and variations in composition and consequently feeding value.
3. In the event that suitable "opportunity feeds" are identified through the above processes, to carry out appropriate nutritional evaluation by means of chemical analyses and feeding trials to determine acceptable levels of inclusion for different life stages.
4. To investigate the cause of food pad necrosis syndrome in mink and determine if there is a relationship between the disease and the feeding of seal meat. If a relationship is found, the research would determine appropriate methods of feed handling and treatment, as well as identify appropriate rates of inclusion, so the product could be utilized as a feed source by the fur industry.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

A shortage of high quality and affordable feed continues to be a priority for the fur industry. Since feed represents the largest cost in raising mink, farmers are continually seeking cheaper ingredients in order to reduce their operating costs. Although the nutritional quality of these "opportunity feeds" is important and clearly influences their usefulness and potential level of inclusion in a mixed ration, it is inappropriate to spend time and money evaluating them when their accessibility and continuity of supply is uncertain.

A number of food processing industries, such as abattoirs and rendering plants, generate potentially useful feed ingredients. These industries themselves are changing with the consolidation and integration of food production and associated waste disposal. Any research into the nutritional value of feeds from these sources should be preceded by an assessment of their availability and cost to the farmer.

It should be noted that opportunity feeds vary from region to region and more so from province to province. Thus what is seen as an opportunity feed in Eastern Canada (ie. - herring, hake, seal meat) may or may not be a viable option for Ontario. Thus time and effort need to be allocated to identify and evaluate opportunity feeds, that could be utilized by the Ontario fur farming sector.

There were 250,000 seals killed off the east coast in 1998. The

Newfoundland government provides incentives to sealers to bring carcasses to shore, but apparently most carcasses are left behind. The fur farm industry competes directly with the pet food industry for most meat by-products; however in most instances the fur farm sector is unable to compete on a price basis. The pet food industry is not seen to be interested in seal meat as a feed ingredient, primarily for public relations reasons. The availability of alternative feed sources such as east coast seal meat provides an appealing option for the industry, but the nutritional quality and safety of these feed sources often have not been well studied. Recently the feeding of seal meat has been suspected to cause a disease in mink characterized by lesions on the feet and nose pads (food pad necrosis syndrome). The cause of this condition, its association (if any) with the feeding of seal meat and methods of feed treatment or feed processing that would allow this product to be useful for the fur industry have high priority. Research funded by the Canada Mink Breeders Association is ongoing, attempting to isolate an infectious agent and describe the epidemiology of the disease. At the present time no causative agent has been identified. The concern associated with the seal meat is an object lesson in the care which must be taken when any novel feed sources are being screened for their potential in fur-bearing production.

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#### **SERVICE RECOMMENDATION #1: DIAGNOSTIC AND ALEUTIAN DISEASE SEROLOGY LABORATORIES**

**TO: ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORIES, LABORATORY SERVICES, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH & OMAFRA**

**PRIORITY LEVEL: C-1**

#### **DETAILS:**

1. To continue provide diagnostic and case related consultative services to fur farmers and veterinarians.
2. To monitor disease trends.
3. To continue to provide blood testing at a price which encourages mink farmers to work towards controlling or eradicating Aleutian Disease (A.D.).
4. To develop a certification program aimed at the long term eradication of A.D. with Animal Health Laboratories providing technical testing or limited technical assistance.

**BACKGROUND:**

The University of Guelph provides complete diagnostic services at its laboratories. The fur farming sector's use of these services has declined significantly over the last few years, which reflects the economic state of the industry. Some farmers have chosen to reduce or eliminate preventative vaccination and diagnostic programs thus risking a ranch outbreak of highly infectious diseases and increased mortality. A more pressing concern is the safety of the producer in the case of an outbreak of a zoonotic disease such as rabies.

OMAFRA also administers the Aleutian Disease Serology Testing Program. The actual testing of the blood samples is done by the Ontario Veterinary College. Aleutian Disease of mink is a viral induced infection which is transmitted from infected breeding stock to their progeny. The disease can result in poor production, increased mortality and a generalised immunosuppression in the farm. The continuation of the diagnostic services and Aleutian Disease (A.D.) serology program is essential.

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**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE FUR-BEARING  
RESEARCH AND SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

1. To review fur-bearing research and services being carried out in Ontario and other jurisdictions.
2. To assess the relevance of the current research and services and to determine if they should be continued, expanded or discontinued.
3. To identify potential new areas of research and services.
4. To recommend in order of priority, which existing or new areas of research or services, should be supported.
5. To assemble a state of the fur farming industry report.
6. To identify emerging issues facing the fur farming industry.
7. To submit reports and make presentations to the Ontario Animal Research and Services Committee, encompassing the sub-committee's recommendations and findings.
8. To invite researchers in Ontario to information meetings where progress in research and services with fur-bearing animals can be presented.
9. To ensure liaison and communication among agencies or groups which have a primary interest in the Ontario fur farming industry.
10. To function through a sub-committee chairperson, appointed by the Ontario Animal Research and Services Committee. The appointment of the chairperson will be for two years. The chairperson will not succeed him/herself, but may serve an additional two year period.

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### 1998 ONTARIO FUR BEARING RESEARCH AND SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

Name	Points of Contact	Organization Represented	Term of Office
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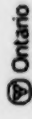
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